United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, in statement to Security Council, says ongoing conflict in Croatia has "serious implications" for Council's consideration of the renewal of UNPROFOR's mandate, due in three weeks.

+ Commission on war crimes in former Yugoslavia, ending session in Geneva, decides to undertake in-depth investigation of mass grave site near Vukovar; United States submits fifth report on violations of human rights; "impeding food deliveries to civilians" added as new category.

+ Strengthening of United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, as proposed by Secretary-General, would cost about $112 million for initial six-month period and $12 million per month thereafter.

+ Maintenance of United Nations Angola Verification Mission would cost $940,000 per month, if Council agrees with Secretary-General's favored option.

+ Mine blast kills seven first-aid workers from Senegalese Red Cross Society and injures four others, in incident on 25 January near Boulouba in Senegal.

+ Recognition of close link between disaster-reduction measures and sustainable development called for by High-Level Council on Natural Disaster Decade, as it ends second session at Headquarters.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali told the Security Council this afternoon that the ongoing conflict in Croatia had "serious implications for the Security Council's consideration of the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)" in that area, which is due in three weeks. The Secretary-General deeply deplored the continued military action by the Croatian armed forces, "which had placed the entire peace process in the region in jeopardy", and renewed his appeal to both sides to cease military action immediately, in compliance with resolution 802.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

He also expressed his particular concern about the grave danger in which UNPROFOR personnel in the area had been placed, with a French UNPROFOR unit under fire at the present time. It is clearly inadmissible for peace-keepers to be held in this way, as it is unacceptable that the Croatian Government should shell areas where United Nations peace-keepers are deployed, said the Secretary-General.

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali made this statement at an informal meeting of the Security Council, at which he briefed the Council members on a report he had received from the UNPROFOR Commander, Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar, who has just returned from the Knin area.

Citing the Force Commander's report, the Secretary-General also said the Croatian authorities were insisting that they would not comply with the Security Council's demands to cease hostilities and withdraw their armed forces, until the Serb militias disarm, demobilize and return the heavy weapons from UNPROFOR depots. Even if the Serbs complied, the President of Croatia had declared his intention to replace his Army in the area with armed police. For its part, the Serb side demanded that the Security Council impose a deadline on Croatia to comply with the Council's resolution and withdraw completely prior to entering into talks under UNPROFOR mediation.

Already yesterday, the Secretary-General had deplored, in a statement, the military action by the Croatian armed forces, which, despite the Security Council's demand that it end, was continuing within and adjacent to Sector South of the United Nations Protected Areas.

The statement further reminded the political and military leaders involved in the conflict that the Security Council holds them responsible and accountable for the safety of United Nations peace-keeping troops deployed in the area.

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The Commission of Experts set up by the Security Council to examine reports of human rights abuses in former Yugoslavia has decided to undertake in-depth investigations into criminal aspects of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its Chairman Frits Karlshoven told the press in Geneva today. The Commission, which concluded its third session today after considering and approving an interim report to the Secretary-General, will next meet in Geneva from 1 to 3 March.

Mr. Karlshoven said the Commission also planned to examine everything related to "the prolonged battle of Vukovar". In that connection, he said, the Commission had received a report from Physicians for Human Rights concerning the mass grave site which had been unearthed at that location.

A tremendous amount of work was being carried out, he went on to say, including the compilation of voluminous information in a Chicago database. The Commission would try to assemble, from that disparate data, information pertaining to particular areas and to particular battles.

(more)

Meanwhile, a United States State Department report has added the "impeding delivery of food and medical supplies to the civilian population" to the category of violations of humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

The report, which is the fifth in line detailing human rights abuses in the former Yugoslavia, was submitted yesterday by the Permanent Mission of United States to the United Nations to be circulated as an official Security Council document and also to be provided to the Commission of Experts, according to a press release issued today by the State Department.

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The cost to strengthen the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), as proposed in a recent report by the Secretary-General, would be about $112 million for an initial six-month period and an additional $12 million per month thereafter, according to an addendum to that report.

The Secretary-General had proposed, in his report, to deploy an additional 31 international staff and 52 locally recruited staff for the enlarged UNIKOM, to offer an adequate response to such violations as occurred earlier this month on the border between Iraq and Kuwait.

Should the Security Council approve of an enlargement of UNIKOM's mandate as suggested, the Secretary-General would recommend to the General Assembly that the associated additional cost be considered an expense of the Organization to be borne by Member States.

The Secretary-General's recommendation follows the Council's request of 11 January that he explore urgently "the possibilities for restoring" UNIKOM to its full strength in order to enhance its effectiveness in cases of emergency.

The current mandate of UNIKOM is to observe any hostile or potentially hostile action mounting from the territory of one State to the other. Document S/25123/Add.1

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It would cost $940,000 per month to maintain the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) under the option favoured by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his report to the Council of 21 January.

According to that report, this option, if approved by the Security Council, would require the deployment of 30 military observers, six police observers and 28 international civilian staff. The other two options call for a monthly expenditure of some 4.7 million and 1.9 million per month, respectively, and a larger deployment of staff.

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The proposed cost estimates were contained in an addendum to the report, dated 25 January, in which the Secretary-General said he would recommend to the General Assembly that the costs relating to the maintenance of UNAVEM II be considered an expense of the Organization to be borne by Member States.

Meanwhile, a United Nations spokesman said today that the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola, Margaret Anstee, was currently holding bilateral talks with delegations of both the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Government of Angola in Addis Ababa. A joint meeting was scheduled for this evening, he said. Document S/25140 /Add.1

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A mine blast killed seven first-aid workers from the Senegalese Red Cross Society and wounded four others, one of them seriously, when their vehicle hit a mine near Boulouba, in Senegal, on Monday, 25 January.

According to a press release issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) yesterday, the Senegalese Red Cross team was taking part in a joint survey with the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The aim of the survey was to assess humanitarian needs in the Casamance province, where the Senegalese National Society is carrying out an assistance operation following unrest in the province.

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The High-Level Council for the International Decade for Natural Desaster Reduction, ending its second session yesterday at Headquarters, adopted a 12-Point Plan of Action which calls for the recognition of the interrelationship between disaster reduction and sustainable development.

In the Plan, the Council proposes measures designed to lead to a reduction of disasters. The proposals, which the Council is recommending that the Secretary-General convey to Member States, focus on the need to reduce the vulnerability of countries to disasters and recognize the interrelationship between environmental concerns and catastrophes, among others things.

The Special High-Level Council for the Decade (1990-2000) was set up to promote public awareness and mobilize support from the public and private sector.

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